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21 March 2018

Mr Marc Knight
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Knight

Short inspection of Drayton Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. After taking up your post three years ago, you have systematically and thoughtfully made changes that have improved the school. Staff, pupils and parents recognise that the school has progressed, so much so that you and your leadership team now provide support to schools within your local partnership. In particular, you have developed the expertise of your senior and middle leaders. They now make a greater contribution to moving the school forward. For example, the early years leader has improved links with the partner pre-school and developed the early years provision. Middle and senior leaders are also working effectively with the very small number of teachers whose practice in some areas needs further development.

Pupils are enthused by the positive atmosphere that you and your staff have created. The emphasis you place on academic excellence, as well as the arts, inspires and energises the entire community. In displays around the school I could see how positively pupils have responded to trips to museums and places of interest, as well as to the visits of professional writers and artists. One parent echoed the views of many, commenting on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 'I am particularly impressed with the energy and enthusiasm of the teachers.'

You, your leadership team and the governors, are determined that the experiences pupils have while at the school are of the highest quality. To this end, you have stringently checked the effectiveness of some of the earlier approaches you

adopted, updating them where necessary. For example, you have refined the approach to assessment you implemented initially after national curriculum levels were removed. You recognise that, currently, the curriculum in some foundation subjects does not enable pupils to gain expertise in the way that it does in core subjects.

When we observed learning we were struck by how effective teachers' and assistants' practice in questioning was in most classes, including in Reception. They often asked probing questions which required pupils and children to think deeply. Searching questions are also helping pupils develop their ability to reason and work out answers for themselves, particularly in mathematics. Across the school, pupils develop the skills required to read effectively. We observed how well pupils coped with interpreting the challenging texts teachers had chosen as class readers. You and your leadership team are also successfully improving writing, which was a key area for development from the school's previous inspection. The scope of pupils' writing is now broader and pupils have a better grasp of the grammatical features associated with different styles of writing. You are aware that some older pupils' spelling is not quite as accurate as you want it to be and have strong plans in place to rectify this.

The governing body has changed a great deal over the past couple of years and is now much more focused and thorough in its work. Working alongside the headteacher, the governing body has enhanced the way it oversees the school's work, including safeguarding. Governors have high expectations for pupils. They carefully question leaders about the impact of their work on pupils, especially on that of disadvantaged pupils. They sensibly insist that leaders provide evidence to support their assertions.

Safeguarding is effective.

The changes you have made since joining the school have improved the understanding of safeguarding and the level of vigilance within the school team. You have worked well with governors to tighten up processes for dealing with safeguarding issues, including concerns raised by staff. You have deepened the expertise in safeguarding of staff and have sensibly trained a number of staff to deputise for the designated safeguarding lead. You are adept at keeping up to date with, and disseminating, safeguarding information, including tips about online safety. Safeguarding procedures and processes are effective and fit for purpose.

You are working in a variety of ways to support pupils and their families so that barriers to learning, such as low self-esteem and poor attendance, are removed. You rightly see this as a priority and have sensibly organised specialist training in emotional literacy for a teaching assistant. She works well with the pupils referred to her, assisting them in managing their high levels of anxiety and understanding their own emotions. Feedback from parents and pupils suggests that her work is making a positive difference.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to explore the impact of subject leaders' actions on improving pupils' progress in mathematics and writing. Subject leaders are making a substantial contribution to strengthening pupils' progress. The mathematics leader is also a senior leader and has a highly developed understanding of how to plan, introduce and monitor new approaches to the teaching of mathematics. The mathematics leader has successfully assisted teachers in devising ways for pupils to visualise complex, abstract mathematical concepts. When we observed mathematics, we saw pupils confidently using diagrams and charts to help them explain equivalent fractions.
- The writing leader has made good use of the expertise he gained from his stint as a moderator for the local authority last academic year. As a result, approaches to the assessment of writing are sharper and less cumbersome. As he is relatively new to the role, he is honing his skills in monitoring and evaluating the impact of agreed approaches. He has accurately identified that some older pupils have gaps in their spelling knowledge. To help fill these gaps he has introduced new methods of teaching spelling, which include regular testing. Although these methods have been brought in recently, the spelling scores of pupils trialling this approach are improving.
- We also reviewed reading across the school, including in early years. Despite pupils' progress being significantly above average in national reading tests in 2017, you are not complacent. You are sensibly providing younger pupils with a solid bedrock of skills in reading, upon which they can build. To this end you have recently changed your approach to the teaching of phonics. We observed a group of Year 1 pupils confidently segmenting words and blending sounds. This was because the teacher was very vigilantly checking to ensure that pupils were pronouncing the sounds that letters represent correctly.
- In key stage 2 classes, thought-provoking questioning by teachers is successfully enabling pupils to extend and deepen their vocabulary. For example, Year 3 pupils confidently answered questions about the effect of the adjective 'pestilential' which they had picked out from the challenging book they were reading as a class text.
- We also looked at the progress pupils make from early years to when they leave the school, across core and foundation subjects. You agree that the curriculum in topic and in foundation subjects needs finessing. Pupils do not always access the knowledge, skills and understanding at the depth required to gain expertise in the foundation subjects they will study at secondary school. A few pupils mentioned to me that they wanted to know 'more stuff'. They gave me examples of aspects of geography and history about which they were curious.
- The chair of the governing body has a detailed understanding of how effectively leaders are tackling the improvement priorities identified. She has sensibly made use of governors' expertise when allocating governors to monitor different aspects of the school's work. In addition, governors have developed a more exacting approach to their monitoring of safeguarding. The local authority's recent safeguarding audit was very positive about this aspect of the school's

work.

- The pupils with whom I spoke praised the school highly and all said they felt safe while at school. One said it was a 'wonderful place'. All the pupils in this group agreed that the school had got better over the last couple of years, citing improvements in pupils' behaviour in class. They also said that they value the way members of staff help them to reflect when they make 'the wrong choices'. This is a key aspect of your new approach to resolving issues between pupils which is being rolled out across the school by the early years leader. You are keenly aware that this process is still relatively new. You are working effectively with the early years leader and also liaising closely with pupils, parents, assistants and teachers to ensure its continued success.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum in foundation subjects enables pupils to master a wider range of subject-specific knowledge and skills.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I checked safeguarding arrangements, including the records of recruitment checks, policies and procedures. I reviewed a range of information, which included the school's own evaluation and improvement plans, external audits and information about pupils' progress. Accompanied by you, I observed pupils learning in mathematics, reading and writing across all year groups, except Year 5. I also met with a group of middle and subject leaders. I met separately with the designated safeguarding lead, who was joined by the assistant responsible for supporting pupils in developing their emotional literacy. I made a phone call to the local headteacher who has been supporting the school on the behalf of the local authority and held a meeting with the chair of the governing body, accompanied by one other governor. I undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work and also met with a small group of pupils. I reviewed 40 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, including 23 free-text comments. I also considered five responses to the staff survey.